

seems to have gone missing.

There are those who would accuse Glenn Gould of interpretative ham-fistedness, but I am not among them. This compilation of live recordings from the 1950s and early 60s is great value for money. The D minor concerto of Bach, the third concerto of Beethoven, the Schoenberg concerto and Strauss's youthful *Burleske* all receive performances of typical Gould insight, and Prokofiev's seventh sonata is real edge-of-the-seat stuff.

The overriding feeling I have in listening to the classic recordings of Lili Boulanger's music is how badly we need some new ones. It is not that these were poor performances, just that in music so unfamiliar (and so individual), the interest generated by the historic nature of the recordings is overshadowed by the wish to encounter the music more directly. Lili Boulanger (1883-1918) was the younger sister of Nadia, the great pedagogue, and her short life produced music that, I suppose, most closely resembles that of Gabriel Fauré. There is, however, a profound sense of isolation and veiled tragedy in her work, and it is as interesting as it is futile to speculate what she might have become had she not died at 35.

**LIM: Garden of Earthly Desire**

**BROPHY: Shiver etc**

Elision

(Dischi Ricordi S.p.A. CRMCD 1020)

**DENCH: Driftglass**

**LIM: Garden of Earthly Desire, etc**

Elision

(OneMone IMI CD1018)

**FORMOSA, DENCH, FOWLER, BROPHY,**

**FERNEYHOUGH ET AL: The Flute Ascendant**

Chislett

(Vox Australis VAST007-2)

**DAVIDSON: Tapestry**

**SCHULTZ: Barren Grounds**

**SABIN: Inner-City Counterpoints**

Perihelion

(Lion 192)

**SMETANIN, BOYD, SHANAHAN, FREDERICKS**

**ET AL: Ossia: Australian Composers Vol.1**

Various

(Jade CD1024)

**MEALE: Incredible Floridas**

**EDWARDS: Laikan**

**SMALLEY: Ceremony II**

Seymour Group

(ABC Classics 434 901-2)



As a composer, I inevitably have a fair bit of contact with a variety of people in the music business. Sometimes I am tempted to turn down the task of reviewing the new

recordings of friends and colleagues — let alone employers or potential employers. The following remarks concern such discs.

I am simply astonished by the first disc from the Melbourne ensemble Elision. The playing, as one has come to expect, is characterised by great virtuosity and urgency of communication. But the recording, too, is splendid. Liza Lim's *Garden of Earthly Desire* is frequently a dense web of intricate lyricism. In this wonderfully transparent recording, we miss not a single nuance. Gerard Brophy's *Shiver* and works by the Italians Franco Donatoni, Mauro Cardi and Sandro Gorli (who also conducts) come across with glittering immediacy. Bravo to Elision and to the disc's producer Riccardo Formosa.

Lim's *Garden* is also featured in a tense, live, concert performance on a second Elision disc, along with Chris Dench's powerful and frankly haunting *Driftglass* and works by Richard Barrett and Alistair MacDonald. Although the recorded sound has a certain cardboard quality (compared to the sumptuousness of the studio disc), the performances are electrifying: music of this virtuosity inevitably loses something when carefully put together under the watchful ear of a sound editor.

Laura Chislett, on her new disc of solo flute music, realised this, and opted to include a live recording from last year's Sydney Spring Festival, of Brian Ferneyhough's *Unity Capsule* (her performance was a highlight of that event). But her other performances on the disc are scarcely less bravura in nature. Brophy's *Nympe-Echo Morphologique*, Dench's *Sulle scale della Fenice* and Jennifer Fowler's *Blow Flute ...* all demonstrate the range of accomplishment of this artist, who in recent years has added considerable emotional weight to her already mind-boggling technique. This is genuinely passionate playing.

The Brisbane ensemble Perihelion's repertoire is almost diametrically opposed to that of Elision and Chislett. Where Elision favours complex, modernist music, Perihelion leans in the direction of gently pulsing motor rhythms and — let's be honest — tunes. Not that these styles are so very exclusive. Just as Lim's *Garden* contains some of the most seductively beautiful sounds I've heard of late, Andrew Schultz's *Barren Grounds* packs a considerable emotional punch, especially its first movement, and Perihelion's artistry is equal to Elision's (although the demands on it are quite different). Schultz's work, in fact, does not really fit

my description of the Perihelion repertoire; on this disc it is the meat in the sandwich — the other works, for me, are not as interesting. Robert Davidson's *Tapestry* is skilled and often striking, especially the darker sonorities and rather claustrophobic harmonies of the final section, but I find some of the sections go on a bit too long. Nigel Sabin's perky *Inner-City Counterpoints* exudes affability (Brisbane on a Sunday morning), where I yearned for just a little menace (Manhattan on a Saturday night).

The sheer range of music being composed in this country is most clearly evident from a mid-price release of works by eleven members of the Fellowship of Australian Composers. They range from the virtuosic to the meditative, from the tonal to the anti-tonal, and from the maximalist to the extremely minimalist. Space dictates that I mention just a few of them, and amongst the most striking are Michael Smetanin's little disco classic *The Ladder of Escape* for seven bass clarinets and two contrabass clarinets, heard here in an especially convincing performance by nine Nigel Westlakes. Ian Fredericks's tape piece *Sunrise* is an evocative soundscape with some very individual touches; Anne Boyd's *For EG* (that's Eric Gross) is the ultimate distillation of her delicate flute and piano pieces, lasting just over a minute and employing only the two pitches in the title; Ian Shanahan's *Arcturus Timespace* for tape and mandolin is especially well suited to CD since it requires dedicated listening (the slide projections used in live performance represent no great loss). The 'Volume I' on the cover is an encouraging sign.

Richard Meale's *Incredible Floridas* is a kind of landmark in Australian chamber music; Ross Edwards's *Laikan* hardly less so. Their appearance on disc (along with Roger Smalley's *Ceremony II*) is welcome, if not belated, and I find it hard to put my finger on what is disappointing about the disc as a whole. It's something to do with the performances. Individually the members of Sydney's Seymour Group make telling contributions (Lawrence Dobell's sinewy E flat clarinet in the Smalley and Tony Fogg's sharp advocacy of the opening section of the Edwards are just two examples). But the music doesn't come and get you as it should in these pieces; there's something a touch subdued and cautious about the performances, and the recording ideally should have more edge.

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